

# Historical Dictionary of Malawi

*Third Edition*

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To the people of Malawi in their pursuit of  
*chitukuko, ufulu, and umodzi*

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**ZWANGENDABA.** Leader of one of the most remarkable migrations in modern history. Zwangendaba was a son of Hlatshwayo, a famous general of the House of Elangeni, and founded numerous **Ngoni** states north of the Zambezi. Zwangendaba, head of the semiautonomous Ncwangeni Jele who lived in the vicinity of St. Lucia in northern Kwazulu Natal, became an important *nduna* (headman, councillor) and general of Zwile, the leader of the Ndwandwe Confederacy. After Zwile lost to Shaka, the Zulu chief, at the battle of Mhlathuse in 1818, Zwangendaba and his followers fled the wrath of Shaka and embarked on a 2,000-mile trek that lasted 30 years, conquering, raiding, and assimilating various ethnic groups they encountered. The party first headed to the Delagoa Bay area of **Mozambique** and then turned northwest into modern **Zimbabwe**, where they destroyed the weakening Rozwi state. In 1835 they crossed the Zambezi near Zumbo into the Luangwa valley toward the Senga country, entering modern south **Mzimba**, where, at Mawiri, **Mhlahlo M'mbelwa Jere** was born around 1840. At this point the party struck north toward Ufipa in modern Tanzania; according to Ngoni traditions, scouts had established the existence of a very good stock of red cattle there. Zwangendaba died around 1848, just short of his destination.

Since all of Zwangendaba's prospective heirs were minors, a major succession dispute broke out. **Ntabeni**, Zwangendaba's brother and adviser, assumed the regency of the Jere family. But soon he died too, and his followers, including his son Ngodoyi, left north toward Lake Victoria and were not heard of again. When Mgayi, the second regent, died, a more serious split occurred. Zulu Gama and his followers moved east and settled in the Songea, the border region between the modern states of **Tanzania** and **Mozambique**; **Mpezeni** moved southwest to the **Bemba** country and then southeast to the Luangwa valley, where he settled in the modern **Chipata** region. His brother, **Mpherembe**, who originally joined him, returned to the main group, which, led by the third regent, **Nduna Gwaza Jere**, had reentered the northern Malawi area. There, under the new *inkosi* (king), **M'mbelwa**, they established a major polity covering present-day **Mzimba** District.

## Bibliography

When democracy returned to Malawi in the early 1990s, restrictions on publications, vigorously enforced through the Censorship Act of 1968, were greatly relaxed, which has led to a proliferation of literature on the country. Some of the recent publications cover new fields, others are revisionist, others still try to explain the very period of limitations on freedom of expression.

The main depository of primary sources for Malawi history remains the National Archives in Zomba. For the colonial period, it is essential to further consult the appropriate files in the Public Records Office, London. Depending on the nature of the research project, the Church of Scotland documents in the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh are likely to prove useful. Other foreign mission headquarters in Europe and North America, including the Vatican Archives in Rome, also hold documents of direct importance to Malawi. The Rhodes House in Oxford, England, and the Society of Malawi offices and library in Limbe contain a variety of sources relevant to Malawi's history. Furthermore, the Malawi Collection in the library of Chancellor College, University of Malawi, Zomba, is a major source of material on Malawi.

A number of major bibliographical collections pertaining to Malawi have been published in the last forty years. The first significant one was *A Bibliography of Malawi* compiled by Edward E. Brown, Carol A. Fisher, and John B. Webster (1965); four years later, John Webster and Paulos Mahome updated it, producing *A Supplement to a Bibliography of Malawi*. The 3,300 unannotated entries in the original publication and those in the 1969 edition are listed according to twenty-four subject classifications, including agriculture, anthropology, education, Christian missions, travel, and zoology. The book reflects the extent of the literature on Malawi in the early 1960s. Although it continues to be useful to researchers today, it has been greatly superseded by more recent, specialized bibliographies, including Ray Jackson, *An Annotated Bibliography of Education in Malawi* (1976), Stan Made et al., *One Hundred Years of ChiChewa Writing, 1875-1975: A Selected Bibliography* (1976); S. Mwiyeriwa, *Vernacular literature of Malawi, 1854-1975* (1976); John W. East, *Reference Works for Malawian Studies: A Select and Annotated List* (1982); and E. J. Mwendera, *A Short History and Annotated Bibliography on Soil and Water Conservation in Malawi* (1989).

Two bibliographical studies are highly recommended. "Malawi: Twenty-Five Years of Independence," by J. Kalley et al. (*Southern Africa Update* 5, no. 1: 1990), is a survey with 745 items listed under twenty-three subject categories, and it is very extensive in its coverage of the literature. More valuable and definitely most comprehensive of them all is Samuel Decalo, comp., *Malawi: Second Edition* (1995).



The book starts with a useful introduction to the history of Malawi, followed by a list of dissertations on subjects directly relevant to Malawi. It has 508 annotated and numbered entries, besides many other items that are added to the main descriptions.

Many books and journal articles, mostly memoirs or travel accounts of missionaries and adventurers, describe Malawi in the nineteenth century. Among them are David Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambezi and Its Tributaries, 1858–64* (1865); Duff MacDonal, *Africana or the Heart of Heathen Africa*, vols. 1–2 (1882). However, the first notable attempt to present an overview of the Lake Malawi region is Harry Johnston, *British Central Africa* (1897). Relying heavily on the author's own observations and the works of others, the book deals with numerous topics including fauna and flora, ethnic groups and their cultures, and the establishment of British authority in the 1880s and 1890s. A more analytical study of the extension of British rule to this area will be found in, among others, Roland Oliver, *Sir Harry Johnston and the Scramble for Africa* (1958); and A. J. Hannah, *The Beginnings of Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia* (1959). Both books are based primarily on missionary and official British sources and do not evaluate the African reaction to the foreign intrusion. Readers interested in Malawi, especially in the African response to colonialism, should start with George Shepperson and Thomas Price, *Independent African: John Chilembwe and the Origins, Setting and Significance of the Nyasaland Native Rising of 1915* (1958). Generally considered a classic, the book also delves into relations between Western Christian missionaries and Africans, between the various missionary societies themselves, and between the missionaries and the colonial government. With an abundance of primary sources and the thoroughness of skilled writers, Shepperson and Price explore the background to the events of January and February 1915.

The 1960s marked the beginning of a new approach to writing about Malawi, one that was careful to encompass African perspectives. This necessitated the use of oral evidence and the need to revisit the hitherto ignored literature by local writers. The result was a number of theses, books, and articles, including Robert Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism in Malawi and Zambia, 1873–1964* (1964) and the doctoral theses of, among others, B. S. Krishnamurthy (1964), McCracken (1967), Andrew Ross (1968), Roderick Macdonald (1969), Roger Tangri (1970), and Emily Maliwa (1970). The enthusiasm and hope for newly independent African nations tended to influence the new writing in the sense that often authors became less critical in assessing actions of Africans during the colonial period. The 1960s also witnessed the beginnings of serious academic interest in precolonial history which, as the bibliography in John G. Pike's *Malawi: A Political and Economic History* (1969) shows, had hitherto been left to amateur historians. From the 1970s on, doctoral theses, books, and articles, all with useful bibliographies, became part of the increasing literature on Malawi. Typical of them are E. A. Alpers (1975), L. Vail (1972), H. W. Langworthy (1973), K. M. Phiri (1975), M. A. Vaughan (1981), O. J. M. Chipeta (1982), O. J. M. Kalinga (1985), and E. C. Mandala (1991), as well as the numerous publications of Matthew Schoffeleers.

*The Early History of Malawi* (1972), edited by Bridglal Pachai, contains the work of twenty-four authors and covers events from prehistoric times to the early twentieth century, another example of the emerging historiography of the 1960s. Articles such as those by M. Channock and R. Palmer, however, demonstrate the more balanced approach that was to be a major aspect of historical analysis of Malawi from the 1970s on.

The first notable overview of the political history of Malawi is T. David Williams, *Malawi: Politics of Despair* (1978), which nevertheless reflects the gaps that result from restricted access to the National Archives of Malawi and restraints on oral interviews. It is to be hoped that the gaps will be filled now that freedom of expression has returned to Malawi. Other books in the field of politics were published in the 1970s: Philip Short, *Banda* (1974), which has important sources, some of them not attributed; Carolyn McMaster, *Malawi Foreign Policy and Development* (1974); Kanyama Chiume, *Kwacha: An Autobiography* (1975). In 1992 Guy Mhone edited *Malawi at the Crossroads: The Post-colonial Political Economy*, representing the first major review of Malawi under President Banda. More recently, biographies such as those by Colin A. Baker have added more to the bibliography of the political and administrative history of the Lake Malawi area.

Also in the 1960s and 1970s, studies reevaluating Christian missionary activities, going beyond the earlier works by Roland Oliver (1951) and George Shepperson (1958), were undertaken and, in many cases, published. They include Ian and Jane Linden, *Catholics, Peasants, and Chewa Resistance in Nyasaland, 1889–1939* (1974); and John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875–1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province* (1977). Howard B. Bicker's "A Missionary Strategy for Evangelism in Central Africa: An Examination of People-Movement Strategy in the Historical Cultural Context of Malawi" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1977); and C. M. Pauw, "Mission and Church in Malawi: The History of the Nkoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, 1889–1962" (D.Th. diss., University of Stellenbosch, 1980). As the main part of this bibliography demonstrates, many dissertations on Christianity were written in the 1980s and 1990s.

In social sciences, Mary Tew's *Peoples of the Lake Nyasa Region* (1950) constituted a pioneering anthropological and sociological study and was accompanied by a useful bibliography. It was followed by J. C. Mitchell, *The Yao Village* (1956); Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland* (1956); and Jaap van Velsen, *The Politics of Kinship: A Study of Social Manipulation among the Lakeside Tonga of Nyasaland* (1964). Since the 1960s, further advances have been made in this general area, and useful bibliographical sources are found in the works of scholars such as Matthew Schoffeleers, Laurel Birch de Aguilar, Hari Englund, and Deborah Kaspin. Many social scientists have joined health specialists in assessing the effects of AIDS on Malawian societies, and there is a growing body of literature on this virus. Paul Kishindo (1995), Ezekiel Kalipeni (1997), and Wiseman Chirwa (1995, 1997, 1999) provide good starting points. In the economic field, the following organizations regularly issue invaluable reports: the Malawi National Statistical Office, the Reserve Bank of Malawi, the various commercial banks in Malawi, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, the Southern Africa Development Community, the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa, and various nongovernmental agencies. The *Africa Research Bulletin*, published in Exeter, England, on a monthly basis, is another important source on economic and political issues.

As Steve Chimombo's *A Bibliography of Oral Literature in Malawi, 1860–1986* (1987) shows, progress has equally been made in the literary field, both in vernacular and in English, adding to the earlier works of Aubrey Kachingwe (1966), Legson Kayira (1965, 1967, 1969), Stevenson Kumakanga (1944), Samuel Ntara (1934,



1944), David Rubadiri (1965), and others. In English, the Writers Workshop at Chancellor College has been central to the emergence of a generation of writers that includes Frank Chipasula, Jack Mapanje, Dede Kamkondo, Paul Zeleza, Anthony Nazombe, and James Ngombe, all of whose works have been published by Heinemann and Longman in their African Writers Series, and by the Limbe-based Popular Publications in their Malawian Writers Series. The latter also publishes in ciChewa.

For scientists, Clemence Namponya, *Annotated Bibliography of Agriculture in Malawi, 1930–1980* (1985); and J. H. A. Maida, *National Inventory of Scientific Publications* (1991) are good starting points. As local research institutions and universities attract well-trained scientists, the literature in this field will continue to increase. Books such as Brian Morris's *The Power of Animals: An Ethnography* (1998) contain useful bibliographies that identify some of the areas in which research is being undertaken and published.

Since the reintroduction of freedom of expression, many more books about Malawi have been published dealing with different aspects of the postcolonial era. Serious attempts by authors such as John Lwanda (1994, 1996) and Peter Forster (1994) have been made to reassess Kamuzu Banda as a national leader. However, one of the most exciting developments is the emergence in Malawi of the Kachere Series, under the general editorship of Professors Joseph C. Chakanza and K. R. Ross of the Theology and Religious Studies Department at Chancellor College, University of Malawi. Most of the Kachere Series books deal with religion and politics, and they are a prime example of a successful multidisciplinary approach to studying and understanding societies in nation building. J. C. Chakanza and K. R. Ross, eds., *Religion in Malawi: An Annotated Bibliography* (1998) is a good introduction to the subject.

The following bibliography on Malawi is extensive but not exhaustive. In order to make it easier to find specific subjects, the bibliography has been divided into the following categories:

1. General
  - a. General Information and Guides
  - b. Demographic Facts and Figures
  - c. Travel and Description
  - d. General Bibliographies
2. Culture
  - a. Arts
  - b. Linguistics
  - c. Literature
3. Economics
  - a. Agriculture
  - b. Commerce, Industry, and Labor
  - c. Development and Monetary Issues
  - d. Transportation and Communications
4. Gender
5. History
  - a. Archaeology
  - b. Precolonial Period

- c. Colonial Period
- d. Postcolonial Period
- e. Biographies and Memoirs
6. Politics
  - a. Administration, Government, Elections
  - b. Constitution, Law, Justice, and Human Rights
7. Society
  - a. Anthropology and Sociology
    - i. General
    - ii. Rural
    - iii. Urban
  - b. Education
  - c. Religion and Missions
8. Science
  - a. Earth Sciences
  - b. Geography, Environment, and Conservation
  - c. Health and Medicine
  - d. Natural Sciences
9. Select List of Malawi Periodicals

## GENERAL

### General Information and Guides

- Agnew, S., and M. Stubbs, eds. *Malawi in Maps*. London: University Press, 1972.
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